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Nietzsche's critique of moralities

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NIETZSCHE'S CRITIQUE OF MORALITIES

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ABSTRACT

It has been argued in this essay that the thesis proposed by George Morgan, Walter Kaufmann, and Arthur Danto is preferable to the popular view of Nietzshean morality. Contrary to the popular view Nietzsche, in the opinion of these interpreters, did not sanction lust, brutality, and cruelty and did not endorse master morality. Instead they argue that Nietzsche held that life should consist of both reason and passion, balanced in such a way that neither order nor impulse is emphasized to the exclusion of the other.

It has been argued in this essay that Nietzsche opposed the giving of absolute prerogative whether in art, science, or morality. His objection to absolute prerogative is most clearly stated in his critique of morality. He made essentially the same complaints against master and slave moralities. Both pose as absolute and both are fundamentally life-negating. Slave and master moral values are affirmed independently of all other values, and slave and master moral values are to be preferred exclusively to all other values and concerns. Also, slave morality is found wanting in that it does not allow for the expression of the passions, and master morality is found wanting in that it does not provide the order and control necessary for human life. Master and slave moralities are therefore life-negating.

It was shown that Nietzsche held that moral values must be subject to criticism. A morality which is beyond critique renders change and innovation, which may occasionally be desirable, impossible. Such a morality may retard and stunt the growth of men and civilization and must, in Nietzsche's view, be rejected. It was concluded that Nietzsche advocated not the return of master morality but the transcending of master and slave morality, indeed the transcending of all absolute moral systems. His purpose was the revitalization of the human condition.

It was shown that Nietzsche sponsored the meta-ethical doctrines that moralities are dependent value systems and that life alone is an absolute value. Nietzsche held that moral systems ought to provide for the discipline and control of the passions while permitting their discharge as a condition of human survival and development. Moral systems ought to be made to serve the needs and demands of life.

It was further shown that Nietzsche regarded himself as a revolutionary. He attempted to diagnose the current moral situation and warred against the accepted absolute valuations. He sought to clear the way for the construction of a moral system which would serve, enhance, and revitalize human life. Nietzsche did not propose to set up new value systems but to contribute, by filling the role of critical philosopher, to what must be a united effort involving critical philosophers and the future philosophers who are to create new values.

INTRODUCTION

Nietzsche's views on morality and his discussion of master and slave moralities are the subject of some philosophical controversy. According to the popular interpretation propounded by historians such as Bertrand Russell,[1] Nietzsche is held to have condemned Christian morality as "slave morality" and to have preferred instead what he termed "master morality." Nietzsche is thought to have advocated violence, coercion, and social domination. His purported exhortation to lust, cruelty, hatred, and brutality of every sort conjures the familiar image of the "blond beast." Moral and emotional laissez-aller, i.e. the uncontrolled display of animal passion, are popularly regarded as the hallmarks of Nietzschean morality.

Textual support for this interpretation can readily be found. Nietzsche openly admired the Roman but scorned the Judaic-Christian tradition.

> The Romans were the strongest and noblest people who ever lived. Every vestige of them, every least inscription is a sheer delight. The Jews, on the contrary, were the priestly, rancorous people par excellence.[2]

His vitriolic attacks on the herd animal or slave morality and his nostalgic comments on master morality suggest a desire for the return to a higher morality.

> But what is all this talk about nobler values? Let us face facts: the people have triumphed -- or the slaves, the mob, the herd, whatever you wish to call them -- and if the Jews brought it about then

> no nation ever had a more universal mission on the face of this earth. The lords are a thing of the past and the ethics of the common man is completely triumphant. The redemption of the human race (from the lords, that is) is well underway; everything is rapidly becoming Judaized, or Christianized, or mob-ized-the word makes no difference.[3]
>
> Morality in Europe today is herd-animal morality.[4]

Nietzsche occasionally seems to have embraced violence, brutality, and injury as the very essence of life.

> Life itself is essential assimilation, injury, violation of the foreign and the weaker, suppression, hardness, the forcing of one's own forms upon something else, ingestion, and -- at least in its mildest form -- exploitation.... "Exploitation is not a part of a vicious or imperfect or primitive society: it belongs to the nature of living things, it is a basic organic function.[5]
>
> A man who strives for great things regards everyone whom he meets on his way as either a means or delay or an obstacle -- or as a temporary bed to rest on.[6]

Finally, Nietzsche himself appears to have expressed clearly his philosophic aim as the transcending or overcoming of slave morality and its valuations "good" and "evil" in favor of the aristocratic valuations "good" and "bad": "I have made sufficiently clear what I mean by the dangerous slogan of the title page of my last book, <u>BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL</u>. At all events I do not mean 'beyond good and bad'".[7]

Despite the passages and references which may be adduced in support of the popular interpretation of Nietzsche's morality, the contrary thesis has been proposed by George Morgan, Walter Kaufmann, and Arthur Danto.[8] The popular understanding of Nietzschean morality arises, according to Danto, from an overly serious emphasis on Nietzsche's flamboyant rhetoric. Nietzsche employed language which at times is admittedly excessive and inflammatory. He did so, Danto argues, because he believed that extravagant language was necessary in order to receive a hearing and to be taken seriously.

The account of Nietzschean morality recommended by Morgan, Kaufmann, and Danto differs perceptibly from the popular view. According to these interpreters Nietzsche did not sanction lust, brutality, and cruelty and did not endorse master morality.

> One should keep in mind that it does not follow from Nietzche's vivisection of slave-morality that he identifies his own position with that of the masters: he means to be descriptive, and though his polemic may create a presumption that he approves of the masters, their morality does not coincide with his own ethics.[9]

Instead they argue that Nietzsche held that life should consist of both reason and passion, balanced in such a way that neither order nor impulse is emphasized to the exclusion of the other.

> Nietzsche held the basically sane if perhaps dull view that the passions and drives of men be disciplined and guided by reason, that our lives be Apollinian [sic.] and Dionysiac at once.[10]

In this essay I shall attempt to show why the interpretation of Morgan, Kaufmann, and Danto is preferable. The fundamental issue which I shall attempt to address is the nature of Nietzsche's objective when dealing with master and slave moralities. Having clarified this point, I shall proceed in chapters two and three to reinterpret Nietzsche's basic criticisms of both types of morality and to delineate what Nietzsche considered to be the function and limits of morality.

CHAPTER I

NIETZSCHE'S OBJECTIVE

Critique of Morality

Nietzsche made five principal charges against the prevailing morality. First, Nietzsche held that the prevailing moral values are viewed as independent of life. Actions which occur in life and indeed life itself are to be approved or condemned with reference to moral values. Moral values, however, are held to be beyond evaluation in terms of life.

> ...this whole cluster of distortions, together with the intransigent Christian assertion that nothing counts except moral values, had always struck me as the most sinister form the will to destruction can take.[11]

Second, the prevailing morality is ascetic. Its proponents hold sensuality and spontaneity in contempt.

> And since according to ethics (spec. Christian absolute ethics) life will always be in the wrong, it followed quite naturally that one must smother it under a load of contempt and constant negation, must view it not only as an object unworthy of our desire but absolutely worthless in itself.[12]

They invent the notion of the better life to be attained in some otherworldly paradise.

> From the very first Christianity spelled life-loathing itself and that loathing was simply disguised with the notion of an "other" and "better" life. A hatred of the "world," a fear of beauty and sensuality, a transcendence rigged up to slander mortal existence, cessation of all effort until the great "sabbath of sabbaths"....[13]

Third, the prevailing morality is tyrannical. "The slave wants an absolute: he understands only tyranny, even in morality."[14] Fourth, the proponents of the prevailing morality insist on a single rule for all without regard for distinctions of rank or special prerogatives.

> That which is fair to one may not be fair to another. The demand of one morality for all means an encroachment upon precisely a superior type of man. There is, in short, an order of rank between men and hence also between moralities.[15]

Finally, the content of the present morality consists in the rigorously maintained antithesis between "good" and "evil." The qualities of the ineffective majority are called "good" while the qualities of the nobility are termed "evil."

> Let us be unlike those evil ones. Let us be good. And the good shall be he who does not do violence, does not attack or retaliate, leaves vengeance to God, shuns all that is evil, and asks very little of life like us, the patient, the humble, the just ones.[16]
>
> It was the Jew who dared to invert the aristocratic valuations good/ noble/ powerful/ beautiful/ happy and maintained that only the poor, the powerless are good; only the suffering, the sick, truly blessed.[17]

Nietzsche had two basic complaints against the prevailing Christian morality. First, it poses as absolute. Christian moral values are to be affirmed independently of their relation to the demands of life, and Christian moral values are to be preferred exclusively to all other values and considerations.

Second, the moral values honored by Christianity are fundamentally life-negating. In the remainder of this chapter Nietzsche's complaints against aesthetic Socratism and the spirit of science will be examined with the intent of showing that these charges are basically the same as those directed against the prevailing morality.

Analogy of Euripidean Drama with Morality

Nietzsche's discussion of the development of the rational tendency in Euripidean drama may serve to throw light upon his criticism of the absoluteness of the prevailing Christian morality. The rational tendency in the context of Greek tragic art may be likened to morality, and the Dionysiac tendency, which is a kind of onrushing of passion and a ceaseless striving which defies order and limitation, may be likened to the passoniate life of man. The relationship between the rational and Dionysiac tendencies parallels the relationship between morality and the human passions.

What had occurred in Greek tragedy, Nietzsche thought, was that the rational tendency had been emphasized to the exclusion of the Dionysiac tendency. Through the influence of Euripides, tragic art began to give a predominant emphasis to the rational tendency. Euripides having embraced the aesthetic Socratic principle that "whatever is to be beautiful must be conscious,"[18] concentrated on freeing his drama of anything irrational and on

establishing drama as a rational structure. Being essentially a rational man, in Nietzsche's view, Euripides was puzzled by the irrational factors in the drama of his predecessors.

> Euripides' basic intention now becomes clear to us: it is to eliminate from tragedy the primitive and pervasive Dionysiac element, and to rebuild drama on a foundation of non-Dionysiac art, custom, and philosophy.[19]

As has been indicated, the relationship in tragic art between the rational and Dionysiac tendencies parallels the relationship between the prevailing morality and the human passions. The establishment of rationality as absolute in art is analogous to the establishment of morality as absolute. In Greek drama as in the prevailing morality, order is given prerogative over the expression of the passions.

Analogy of the Spirit of Science with Morality

Nietzsche's critique of the spirit of science in THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY may also serve to illumine his main criticisms of the prevailing morality. Science may be likened to morality in that it too can be set up as absolute. The relationship between science and impulse or irrationality parallels the relationship between morality and the passions.

Nietzsche believed that Socratism, which embodied the spirit of science, eventually became the antagonist of tragic art and supplanted tragedy with rational optimism. The universe was conceived to be ultimately intelligible, and it was believed

that through the acquisition of knowledge man could be liberated even from the fear of death. Preoccupation with the pursuit of knowledge and rational inquiry together with disdain for impulse and irrationality combined to require that art be repudiated as illusory.

> To Socratic man the one noble and truly human occupation was that of laying bare the workings of nature, of separating true knowledge from illusion and error. So it happened that ever since Socrates the mechanism of concepts, judgments, and syllogisms has come to be regarded as the highest exercise of man's powers, nature's most admirable gift.[20]

The Socratic spirit produced the beliefs that truth must be pursued and that reality can be fathomed and purged of evil by rational thought and its implications. Science came to be regarded as the unique instrument of human survival, and from it human aims, beliefs, values, and even virtue were thought to be derived.

> Socrates and his successors, down to our day, have considered all moral and sentimental accomplishments -- noble deeds, compassion, self-sacrifice, heroism, even that spiritual calm so difficult of attainment -- to be ultimately derived from the dialectic of knowledge.[21]

Science thus became absolute; it was to be preferred over impulse and irrationality. The setting up of science as absolute over impulse and irrationality is similar to the setting up of morality as absolute over the human passions. One can discern, therefore, an analogy between science and

impulse on the one side and morality and the passions on the other side.

Nietzsche made essentially the same charge against morality, Euripidean drama, and the spirit of science: absolute prerogative is given to one of two competing forces. Instead of a balance between the two forces one is given predominant emphasis. This is what Nietzsche opposed in each of these cases. He objected to the setting up of morality as independent of life. He opposed the setting up of rationality as absolute over Dionysiac impulse in Euripidean drama. Finally, Nietzsche objected that science was given predominant preference over impulse and irrationality. In the following section I shall discuss in some detail what absolute morality is, and I shall also indicate its importance in Nietzsche's critique of morality.

The Root of Nietzsche's Critique is Absolute Morality

Nietzsche objected to absolute prerogative whether in art, science, or morality. The root of Nietzsche's objection to absolute prerogative is most clearly stated in his critique of morality. By absolute morality is meant one in which moral values are affirmed independently of other values and one in which moral values are to be preferred exclusively to all other values and considerations. Values of life such as spontaneity and sensuality are subordinated to moral values

and are made subject to moral criticism. Even art, science, and philosophy are made subject to moral criticism. Absolute morality itself, however, is beyond critique. Its values are given absolute prerogative. Furthermore, absolute moral values are unchangeable and eternally valid. As a result, fundamental change and innovation in morals are impossible.

Change and innovation in morals may be desirable. To determine whether or not they are to be pursued, an evaluation of the current moral situation must be made. Morality must occassionally be subjected to criticism. Thus, it was Nietzsche's intention to subject the prevailing morality to criticism. Any morality which poses as absolute must be rejected because such a morality makes even consideration of the advisability of changes in morals impossible.

CHAPTER II

NIETZSCHE'S CRITICISMS OF MASTER AND SLAVE MORALITIES

Criticisms of Slave Morality

Nietzsche's five principal charges against slave morality, which is exemplified by the prevailing morality, can be formulated in terms of two basic criticisms: it poses as absolute and it is, by virtue of its genesis, i.e., ressentiment, life-negating. Nietzsche vigorously objected to the insistence of the proponents of slave morality that moral values are independent of and to be preferred exclusively to life values. Instead of being subordinate to and subservient to life, slave morality, while being itself beyond critique, is made capable of condemning life itself. In slave morality reason and order are given prerogative over the human passions which are to be despised and to be suppressed completely. The overriding emphasis in slave morality, therefore, is on an orderly rather than on a passionate life.

The proponents of slave morality condemn this world along with the passions, art, beauty, and sensuality. This earthly life is held to have no intrinsic value and to be merely a bridge to a transcendent life.

> From the very first Christianity spelled life-loathing itself and that loathing was simply disguised with the notion of an "other" and "better" life.[22]
>
> And since according to ethics (spec. Christian absolute ethics) life will always be in the wrong, it followed quite naturally that one must smother it under a load of contempt and constant negation, must view it not only as an object unworthy of our desire but absolutely worthless in itself.[23]

In slave morality love of the earthly and sensual is transformed into hatred. The virtuous man is the one who is "unworldly" and "unsensuous."

The first reason that Nietzsche held slave morality to be inimical to life was that it views moral values as absolute and therefore as unchangeable and beyond criticism. It is because slave morality renders fundamental moral change impossible that it constitutes a retardation, a retrogression, and a stagnation of the human species.

Nietzsche's second basic criticism of slave morality is that it is, by virtue of its genesis, i.e., ressentiment, life-negating. Nietzsche believed that slave morality arose from feelings of resentment, hatred, envy, and from the desire for revenge. He imputed to the Jews responsibility for the inversion of the apparently life-affirming aristocratic valuations "good" and "bad" with which the slave revolution in morals began.

> The Jews performed the miracle of the inversion of valuations, by means of which life on earth obtained a new and dangerous charm for a couple of millenniums. Their prophets melted down into one notion that notions "rich," "godless," "violent," and "sensual" and coined for the first time the shameful meaning of the word "world." In this reversal of the values (another part of it is the use of "poor" as synonymous with "holy" and "friend") lies the significance of the Jewish people: here is the beginning of the slave revolt in morality.[24]

Nietzsche held that the Jews were the priestly people who succeeded in avenging themselves on their enemies and oppressors by radically inverting their enemies' values. The greatest and most intelligent haters in history have been priests, according to Nietzsche. It was their impotence which made their hatred "so violent and sinister, so cerebral and poisonous."[25] The priests were jealous of the prerogatives of the warrior caste. They found themselves unable to come to terms with the warriors. When the priests became rivals of the warriors, they adopted a set of values opposed to that of the aristocrats, which "presuppose a strong physique, blooming, even exuberant health, together with all the conditions that guarantee its preservations: combat, adventure, the chase, the dance, war games etc...." The priests whose hatred was made more insidious by their impotence identified, for the sake of spiritual revenge upon the rival warrior caste, the poor, the humble, the lowly, the mediocre, the sick and the unfortunate as the good; and

promised eternal damnation to the powerful, the happy, and the noble.[27] This entire process including the feelings of resentment, hatred, envy, and the spirit of revenge together with the inversion of aristocratic values constitutes what Nietzsche termed "ressentiment."

> The slave revolt in morals begins by rancor turning creative and giving birth to values -- the rancor of beings who, deprived of the direct outlet of action, compensate by an imaginary vengeance. All truly noble morality grows out of triumphant self-affirmation. Slave ethics, on the other hand, begins by saying "no" to an "outside," and a "other," a non-self, and that "no" is its creative act.[28]

Slave morality is, therefore, a creation of ressentiment; it is reactive, vengeful, and life-negating. In slave morality "evil" is the primary term and "good" is derivative. Slave morality required for its inception a sphere different from and hostile to its own. "Physiologically speaking, it requires an outside stimulus in order to act at all; all its action is reaction."[29] Slave morality began when the ineffective majority adopted the values prescribed by the priests, when they too grew to resent being treated simply as means for the masters' purposes and pleasures.

The herd, as Nietzsche termed the ineffective majority once it had adopted the values of slave morality, resorted to treachery and deceit in order to inflict revenge upon

its masters. Through devious means the masters were made to accept the values of slave morality and to evaluate themselves with reference to it. Thus, through the efforts of the impotent priests and through the weakness of the majority of men, the inversion of the older aristocratic values was accomplished. This inversion of the aristocratic values Nietzsche termed "the act of the most spiritual vengeance."[30]

Criticisms of Master Morality

Nietzsche held that master morality, although it appears in contrast to slave morality to be life-affirming, must also be rejected. Master morality, just as slave morality, poses as absolute. The proponents of master morality claim that aristocratic moral values are to be affirmed independently of all other values and are to be preferred exclusively to all other values and concerns. The proponents of master morality insist that it is the standard by which everything else is to be approved or condemned. Master morality itself, however, is beyond critique. As a result, noble values cannot be changed even for the improvement of the human condition.

While the proponents of master morality do esteem certain qualities essential to life, they repudiate others, namely, those esteemed by the proponents of slave morality. The content of master morality consists in the rigorously

maintained antithesis between "good" and "bad." In master morality the effective individuals are exalted and held to be superior in an absolute sense to whoever does not resemble them in that in which their excellence consists. According to the proponents of master morality, the difference between the masters and the rest is vast and crucial. They view manking as divided into two distinct classes: the "good" -- those who possess the qualities which typify the aristocrats, and the "bad" -- those who lack these qualities or only possess them to an inferior degree.[31]

> The distinguished human being divorces himself from the being in whom the opposite of such elevated and proud conditions is expressed. He despises them. One may note immediately that in the first type of morality the antithesis "good" vs. "bad" means "distinguished vs. despicable."[32]

An advantage of master morality is that by contrast with slave morality it appears to be life-affirming. Qualities essential to life, in Nietzsche's view, such as power, confidence in the future, and love of the earthly and sensual are esteemed in the case of master morality. Master morality is affirmative and spontaneous; it is self-glorifying; it grows out of triumphant self-affirmation. The masters honor everything they know about themselves. They take delight in being rigorous and hard with themselves and have a respect for anything rigorous and hard. They delight in the expression of the passions. They have a profound respect for age

and origins. They have faith in and preference for their ancestors. Furthermore, the masters regard themselves as having duties only toward their equals. In regard to those of lower rank they act as they see fit -- "as one's heart dictates" -- in any event, "beyond good and evil."[33]

Although master morality unlike slave morality appears at first glance to be life-affirming, it too is ultimately life-negating. In posing as absolute, master morality gives predominant preference to impulse as opposed to order and control. It thus sacrifiees restraint and disciplined control in the community. The result is that the community of men is reduced to chaos and consequently destroyed. Since human life exists only in the community, the decision to give predominant preference to impulse is life-negating.

> Deep within all these noble races there lurks the beast of prey, bent on spoil and conquest. This hidden urge has to be satisfied from time to time, the beast let loose in the wilderness. This goes as well for the Roman, German, Japanese nobility as for the Homeric heroes and the Scandinavian Vikings.[34]

Nietzsche argued analogously in THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY. Just as he objected to the giving of absolute prerogative to the rational tendency over the Dionysiac tendency, he objected also to the giving of predomiant preference to impulse over order. He was aware that the Dionysiac tendency leads to wantonness, licentiousness, and destruction unless it is disciplined and transformed by the rational tendency.

> What kept Greece safe [from the passionate excesses of lust and cruelty of barbaric Dionysianism] was the proud, imposing image of Apollo who in holding up the head of the Gorgon to those brutal and grotesque Dionysiac forces subdued them. Doric art has immortalized Apollo's rejection of all license.[35]

CHAPTER III

FUNCTION AND LIMITS OF MORALITY

Summary

According to the popular interpretation of Nietzschean morality, Nietzsche condemned Christian morality as "slave morality" and preferred instead what he termed "master morality." In the last chapter Nietzsche was shown to have found master morality wanting on the same two counts as slave morality. Both moralities pose as absolute and both are fundamentally opposed to the needs and demands of human life. This lends credence to the opinion of Morgan, Kaufmann, and Danto that Nietzsche's objective was not an endorsement of a specific morality but a critique of all moralities. "Let us articulate that new claim: we need a critique of all moral values; the intrinsic worth of these values must, first of all, be called into question."[36]

Nietzsche did not urge a return to master morality. He asked that men go beyond the past, neither reverting to the ethics of the masters nor remaining slaves. "Nietzsche envisages his task as the self-overcoming of Christian morality and in an extended sense of the entire Moral Period."[37] Nietzsche opposed viewing any morality as independent of life. He advocated transcending both master and slave moralities, indeed transcending all absolute moral systems.

> The surpassing of morality, the self-surpassing of morality in a certain sense: this may be taken to be the name of that long secret labor which is in store for the subtlest, most candid, also most malicious consciences of today.[38]

Nietzsche's purpose was the revitalization of the human condition. He recognized that any morality which is viewed as absolute is inaccessible to change and innovation. Its continued existence retards and stunts the growth of men and civilizations.

Nietzsche sponsored the meta-ethical doctrines that moralities are dependent value systems and that life alone is an absolute value. Nietzsche believed that moralities should come to be viewed as dependent. They should be subordinated to some other value and should be evaluated in terms of it. Life is the ground of morality and the standard by which alone any moral system is to be judged. Life alone is an absolute value. The value of any morality must be its service to and enhancement of life.

> Nietzsche is interested in morals, philosophy, and art as means for the enhancement, affirmation, and deification of existence.[39]

> In adopting life as his standard Nietzsche intends to exclude both supernatural and fragmentary values, nothing beyond life and nothing less than it shall be accepted....Loyalty to life -- "remaining true to the earth" -- is the essential basis of Nietzsche's demand for a revaluation of values.[40]

The Function and Limits of Morality

Nietzsche believed that the function of morality is to give form to the expression of the human passions. In order to do this it must provide a constraining force in order to organize the chaos of the passions thereby making life possible for men. Moralities are essential to civilization precisely because of the enduring restraint they provide. "What is essential and of inestimable value in each morality is that it is a long-lasting restraint."[41] This restraint has made possible all noteworthy human accomplishments.

> The essential thing in heaven and on earth, it seems, is -- to say it once more -- that there be obedience, long continued obedience in some one direction. When this happens, something worthwhile always comes of it in the end, something which makes living worthwhile; virtue, for example, or art or music or dance or reason or spirituality.[42]

Indeed, civilization has its roots in morality in the sense of enforced obedience to arbitrary rules.

> The strange fact, however, is that everything of freedom, subtlety, boldness, dance, and craftsmanlike certainty that one can find on earth, whether it applies to thinking, or ruling, or speaking, or persuading -- in the arts as well as in codes of conduct -- would never have developed save through the "tyranny of such arbitrary laws." Indeed, the probability is strong that this is "nature" and "natural" -- and not -- laisser aller!"[43]

Nietzsche stressed that the viability of a morality does not turn on the rules which it supports. The function of a morality is to provide a way of disciplining and controlling the passions while permitting their discharge. That this function be exercized satisfactorily is a necessary condition of human survival and development.[44] Indeed, the tyranny, severity, and even stupidity of moral rules is, Nietzsche believed, essential to the education and development of the human spirit.

> All this tyranny, this arbitrariness, this rigorous and grandiose stupidity has disciplined and educated the spirit. It seems that slavery, in both its coarser and finer application, is the indispensable means for even spiritual discipline and cultivation. Look at any morality -- you will see that it is its "nature" to teach hatred of laisser-aller, or too much freedom, and to implant the need for limited horizons, for the nearest task. It teaches the narrowing of perspectives, in other words stupidity in a certain sense, as a necessary condition for life and growth.[45]

As morality has its function, it also has its limits. According to Nietzsche, morality is not to be viewed as the ground of the human passions. Rather, the passions of man are to be viewed as the ground of morality. A moral system must come to be regarded not as independent but as dependent. It ought to provide control of the passions while allowing for their expression. Accordingly, any moral system which enjoins rules of order which preclude in principle the expression of the passions exceeds the limits within which

alone it could have value for man. Such a moral system is no longer valuable in preserving life and providing control together with expression of the passions. Instead of being dependent on life such a morality asserts its rules to be valid independently of life. Furthermore, by claiming to be the standard of absolute value it is life-negating. On the other hand, a morality which is kept within its appropriate limits recognizes that life values alone are absolute. Such a morality is life-affirming.

The Role of the Critical Philosopher

Nietzsche was aware that there are and have been many moralities which might be made to satisfy these requirements. He knew that the task of revolutionizing human life will not be complete until the construction and adoption of such a moral system is accomplished. He was also fully cognizant of the fact that his critique of morality did not provide a sufficient base for accomplishing this final step in the "transvaluation of all values." Although Nietzsche did not finish the task which he thought was required, he did, by filling the role of the critical philosopher, contribute to what must be a combined effort.

Nietzsche viewed his function as critical philosopher as one of attempting to eliminate the superstition that

moral values are absolute. His self-appointed task was to overturn the prevailing absolute valuations which persisted to his day and which had resulted in the decadence and stagnation of civilization. Nietzsche saw himself as a revolutionary. He attempted to diagnose the existing moral situation and to war against the accepted valuations. His ambition was to fill the role of philosopher.

> All these extraordinary furtherers of mankind (who are called philosophers but who rarely feel like lovers of wisdom, more like disagreeable fools and dangerous question marks), have hitherto found their task, their hard, unwanted, peremptory task -- but ultimately also the greatness of their task -- in being the bad conscience of their time. By putting the vivisectionist's knife to the virtues of their time, they revealed their own secret: they knew a new magnitude of man, a new un-worn path to his magnification.[46]

Nietzsche's intention was not to reverse the prevailing valuations but by internal criticism to unmask the hypocrisy, mendaciousness, indolence, and lack of self-discipline hidden under the most venerated types of morality.[47] Instead of rationalizing past or current value systems Nietzsche launched a critique of the supremacy of moral values themselves.[48]

In Nietzsche's view his critique of morality was valuable in that by it he cleared the way for new value creations, for a new set of rules of behavior. He sought to provide the opportunity for a change of moral values. When a morality outlives its usefulness it then becomes tyrannical and

and inhibits the growth of men and civilizations. Nietzsche believed that this had indeed happened.

> If a morality outlives its usefulness what then? Should this happen -- as Nietzsche believed it had -- a new morality is needed. Nietzsche hoped we would create new values or that the superior men among us would do so.[49]

Nietzsche hoped that moral codes might be transformed into something more viable, more life-enhancing. He did not envisage his own task, however, as one of value legislation or value creation. He looked to future philosophers for the creation of values.

> The task itself is something else: it demands that he [the real philosopher] create values .... The real philosophers are commanders and legislators. They say, "It shall be thus!" They determine the wither and the to what end of mankind.[50]

In relation to such law-givers Nietzsche regarded himself as a herald and a precursor.

> After all this need I say especially that they shall be free, very free thinkers, these philosophers of the future? But, as I am saying this, I feel the obligation (almost as much toward them as toward ourselves, who are their heralds and forerunners, we free thinkers) to blow away from all of us an old stupid prejudice and misunderstanding which for too long a time has made the concept "free thinker" opaque.[51]

Nietzsche's discussion of the three metamorphoses in THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA illustrates his own position as critical philosopher in the evolution of values and his relationship to the philosophers of the future. The three metamorphoses of the spirit are the camel, the lion, and the child.[52] The

figure of the camel or beast of burden symbolizes the human spirit during the period when it is burdened by and subjected to the discipline of absolute norms and values. The figure of the lion represents the human spirit during the period of its defiance of absolute values and during the period of its creation of its own freedom and independence. The lion is the human spirit which criticizes the absolute norms and values. "The creation of freedom for one's self and a sacred 'No' even to duty -- for that, my brothers, the lion is needed."[53] The defiant lion which symbolizes the critical philosopher, however, is not the creator of new values. "To create new values -- that even the lion cannot do."[54] The child represents the human spirit as the creator of new values, that is, the "real philosopher."

> But say, my brothers, what can the child do that even the lion could not do? Why must the preying lion still become a child? The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred "Yes." For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred "Yes" is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world.
>
> Of three metamorphoses of the spirit I have told you: how the spirit became a camel; and the camel a lion; and the lion, finally, a child.[55]

FOOTNOTES

[1]See Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), pp. 760-772.

[2]Friedrich Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, trans. F. Golffing: The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals (New York: Doubleday, 1956), p.186.

[3]Genealogy, pp. 169-170.

[4]Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, trans. Marianne Cowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), p.112.

[5]Beyond Good and Evil, p.201.

[6]Beyond Good and Evil, p.222.

[7]Genealogy, p.187.

[8]George Morgan, What Nietzsche Means (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941); Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Anti-Christ (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950); Arthur Danto, Nietzsche as Philosopher (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

[9]Kaufmann, p.260.

[10]Danto, p.149.

[11]Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, trans. F. Golffing: The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals (New York: Doubleday, 1956), p.11.

[12]The Birth of Tragedy, p.11.

[13]The Birth of Tragedy, pp. 10-11.

[14]Beyond Good and Evil, p.54.

[15]Beyond Good and Evil, p.155.

[16]Genealogy, p.179.

[17]Genealogy, pp. 169-170.

[18]The Birth of Tragedy, p.79.

[19]The Birth of Tragedy, p.76.

[20]The Birth of Tragedy, p.94.

[21]The Birth of Tragedy, p.94.

[22]The Birth of Tragedy, pp.10-11.

[23]The Birth of Tragedy, p. 11.

[24]Beyond Good and Evil, p.104.

[25]Genealogy, p. 167.

[26]Genealogy, p.171.

[27]Morgan, p.159.

[28]Genealogy, pp. 170-171. Golffing translates "ressentiment" as "rancor".

[29]Genealogy, p.171.

[30]Genealogy, p. 167.

[31]Danto, p.157.

[32]Beyond Good and Evil, p.203.

[33]Beyond Good and Evil, p.205.

[34]Genealogy, p.174.

[35]The Birth of Tragedy, p.26.

[36]Genealogy, p.155.

[37]Morgan, p.167.

[38]Beyond Good and Evil, p.39.

[39]George de Huszar, "The Essence of Nietzache," The South Atlantic Quarterly XLIII (October, 1944), 373.

[40]Morgan, p.116.

[41]Beyond Good and Evil, p.94

[42]Beyond Good and Evil, p.95.

[43]Beyond Good and Evil, pp. 94-95.

[44]Danto, p.151.

[45]Beyond Good and Evil, p.96.

[46]Beyond Good and Evil, p.136.

[47]Beyond Good and Evil, p.136.

[48]Kaufmann, p.87.

[49]Danto, p.183.

[50]Beyond Good and Evil, pp. 134-135.

[51]Beyond Good and Evil, p. 49.

[52]Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, trans. W. Kaufmann: The Portable Nietzsche (New York: Viking Press, 1968) I, "On the Three Metamorphoses," p.137.

[53]Zarathustra, p.139.

[54]Zarathustra, p.139.

[55]Zarathustra, p.139.

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